

# Colorado Maternal and Child Health Priority

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## Youth Sexual Health Annual Update

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*January 1 – December 31, 2012*

### Significant 2012 MCH Priority Achievements

- *Youth Sexual Health: A Call to Action*: We released this long-awaited document and tool for communities in the fall of 2012. The community tool includes research, guidance and a number of strategies that communities can incorporate into their own community action plan to address youth sexual health. Over 100 youth and adults gathered on a Saturday morning at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science to witness the official launch, hear from youth, parents, community members and policymakers. We then conducted a launch in Pueblo with the local public health agency. Over half of the participants at this event were youth. An exciting dialogue sparked between youth and adults related to sexual health. Additionally, a Livestream orientation to the Call to Action was recorded to help communities look at the document in more depth so they can use the tool to improve outcomes for youth. We also began strategizing options and ideas for financially supporting local communities to use the Call to Action to implement a customized community plan.
- *Strengthened the Infrastructure of the Youth Sexual Health Team*: The Youth Sexual Health Team also serves as the Youth Sexual Health MCH Implementation Team (MIT). This year we reexamined and improved components of the charter, including team structure and membership roles. State agencies are now officially the “members” and the community partners (including LPHAs) are “advisors” to the group. We are now sharing leadership responsibility with CDE, CDHS and HCPF. This includes creating agendas together, setting the direction of the group and implementing action steps. As a result of this new structure, the team chose to focus its efforts on parent/family engagement, education and connectedness regarding youth sexual health in order to build an infrastructure for “askable adults” across the state. This focus not only supports several strategies listed in the Call to Action’s statewide logic model, but it also nicely aligns with the “parent/families objective” in the MCH action plan.
- *Child Health Survey Questions*: We successfully advocated for and purchased sexual health education questions to be on the Child Health Survey (available upon request). This information will serve as a baseline in moving forward to improve parent-child communication on sexual health topics.
- *Working with MPH Students*: We worked with two MPH graduate students to conduct two assessments to support the MCH Action Plan. The first was a scan of parent-child communication interventions that helped determine the most appropriate trainings to hold across the state. Twenty-one interventions were identified and information was provided on components such as the intended audience, theoretical basis, findings and level of family involvement. The second was a scan of sexual health policies in place at the state-level and within Denver and Jefferson Counties. This scan includes the specific policy language and a “Simply Stated” section so it is easy to understand. A section with recommendations to influence, strengthen or create new policies was included as well.

### Implementation Challenges Encountered

- *Youth Sexual Health Network*: Mainly due to capacity issues, the youth sexual health network is not formalized yet. Using the Youth Sexual Health Team’s individual networks and contacts, it is fairly easy to get information out across the state. However, we have not named the network and have not determined an ongoing communication method yet. It is important to include other state agencies in this planning as they have been developing their own web presence and communication efforts. To ensure we make this a priority, we have set a date for the first network meeting in spring 2013.

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- Parent-Child Communication/Connectedness Training: We chose to put this training on hold due to a vacancy of the Executive Director of Colorado Youth Matter (the only organization trained in two of the chosen curricula for parents). We could not have anticipated this change, but felt strongly that we should wait to see who the new director was before moving forward. As of January, Lisa Olcese (a trusted and invaluable partner) was hired for the position. Therefore, we are now in process of developing a contract with Colorado Youth Matter to conduct these statewide trainings.

## **Local Public Health Agency Implementation Support**

- As mentioned above, a Livestream is now available online to assist communities in using the Call to Action for planning and implementing youth sexual health strategies.
- We also held three learning community calls with LPHAs, which were well attended by both larger and smaller LPHAs.
- We conducted an LPHA survey to gauge their training needs related to youth sexual health. Results of the survey have informed the direction of the statewide trainings.

## **Lessons Learned in 2012**

- The policy “windows” that we have learned about from Susan Motika really do arise. This year we had the chance to give input into proposed legislation. We learned a lot about this process and understand how important it is to have an idea of what types of policies CDPHE would like to promote or support related to sexual health.

## **Next Steps and Goals for 2013**

- Youth Sexual Health Call to Action: We will be hosting 4 more regional launches for the Call to Action, in partnership with CO9to25, to ensure both rural and urban communities can begin to implement the strategies listed in the document. They will be held in Ft. Collins, Durango, Grand Junction and Yuma. (Depending on time and resources, we may do one in Lamar as well.) We will also continue to provide technical assistance to communities who are using the Call to Action to develop and implement local community action plans. We will explore opportunities to fund a few pilot communities to develop, implement and evaluate their customized action plans.
- Parent-Child Communication and Connectedness: We are developing a 3-year contract with Colorado Youth Matter to conduct parent-child communication/connectedness trainings, in addition to trainings on for communities on using the Call to Action to develop customized action plans. We also plan to build off of the success of Denver Health’s Westwood Speaks project, which was funded by the Preventative and MCH Block Grants. This project modified a parent-child connectedness curriculum and paired it with a communication curriculum. Since it has shown successful results, we are exploring the option of replicating it across the state through our contract with Colorado Youth Matter.
- Youth-Friendly Family Planning Clinics: Now that we have discussed the conceptual steps in moving forward to work with Family Planning Clinics to be more “youth-friendly,” we will develop and begin to implement a detailed plan for moving forward in partnership with Family Planning staff.
- Policy: We will continue to monitor proposed legislation and gauge the impact it would have on our work. We will review the Call to Action and think through strategies related to policy that are appropriate and relevant for our state level work. We will work to identify policy recommendations by using the policy scan that was created, soliciting input from the youth sexual health team and by working in partnership with Susan Motika. Our goals on the action plan are to create educational materials related to these recommendations, a related communications plan and then a sustainability plan for distributing the materials.